

VAMPIRE VENTURERS

The six Vampire 3s, before the start of their historic goodwill visit to Canada and America, seen from a Lincoln flying in the vicinity of Odiham.

Jet Fighters of No. 54 Squadron Leave in Convoy for the New World

NO post-war operation by the R.A.F. has been fraught with greater significance, nor has so captured the popular imagination, than the flight to Canada and the U.S.A. by D.H. Vampires of No. 54 Squadron. Our account of this adventurous, though carefully planned, undertaking must be prefaced by some apology for an erroneous caption which appeared in the preceding issue of *Flight*, to the effect that the squadron engaged is No. 111. Readers who have studied our previous notices of the flight will have instantly realized that this was a slip. To reiterate, the unit selected for the honour of making the first transatlantic flight in jet aircraft is the illustrious "54," which has one of the finest records in Fighter Command. Thereby, incidentally, hangs an interesting story.

Though the force commander on the present flight—or "overall leader"—as the Air Ministry has seen fit to style him—is W/C. D. S. Wilson-MacDonald, D.S.O., D.F.C., the commanding officer of No. 54 Squadron is S/L. R. W.

Oxspring, D.F.C. and two bars, whose father was a member of the same squadron, operating in Northern France, during World War I. The squadron still sings a song in which Oxspring the Elder figures under the soubriquet of "Oxo." Here indeed is an instance of Service tradition at its finest.

Notwithstanding the thoroughness of the preparations, the success of the flight will largely depend upon the ability of the personnel engaged. The five pilots who will fly the Vampires led by S/L. Oxspring on their long over-

water crossings are F/L. R. W. Wright, D.F.C., D.F.M.; F/L. F. C. Woolley, D.F.C. and bar; Plt. I. W. C. Wood; Plt. I. S. Evans; and Plt. II. R. J. Skinner. Additional pilots, whose principal role will be that of "individualists" in the aerobatic displays, are S/L. M. H. Courtney, D.F.C. and bar; F/L. N. W. Heale; and F/L. C. I. Colquhoun, D.F.C.; the officer in charge of ground staff is F/L. W. L. Carey-Browton. A heavy

